

BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY: POTISKUM EXPREINCE

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Abstract

Boko Haram militant group was founded far back 1994 but goes latent and re-appeared in 2003 and 2009 violently. They are claiming to establish an Islamic State in North eastern Nigeria with their Headquarters in Maiduguri the capital of Borno State. The activities of Boko Haram goes violent in 2009 as they wage war on citizen, government officials and anybody against their doctrines. The first physical combat between security personals and Boko Haram insurgency was fought in Maiduguri and Potiskum town of Yobe State in 2009 then later spread to other towns and cities of Borno, Bauchi and Yobe State. These negative developments make Potiskum town one of the Strong holes of Boko Haram insurgency. This study aimed at narrating the experiences of local people of Potiskum town about Boko Haram. However, the study used primary data which was collected using interview. The findings shows that many people lost their relatives, property and some rendered homeless as a result of insurgency. Finally, the paper recommends ideological warfare rather than physical assault as a solution to Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Militant, Islamic State, Ideological warfare and physical assault

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Boko Haram had its roots in and drew inspiration from the *Maitatsine* uprisings of the early 1980s, in terms of objectives but its organizational planning, armed resistance and modus operandi are more in tune with Taliban (Danyibo, 2009) as we shall show later. The actual date when the extremist sect evolved is still a subject of controversy. The years, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2003 have been freely ascribed to it at different quarters. However, a group known as *Shabaab* Muslim Youth Organization evolved in 1995, was said to have progressively metamorphosed to become Boko Haram by year 2000 (Danyibo, 2009). This position has been reinforced by a report in the Sunday Tribune of 12th February, 2012 which stated that information at the disposal of the different security agencies indicated that contrary to the widely held belief that the Boko Haram started around 2003 the group has been existing since 1995. It probably maintained a shadowy existence until around 1999 when Mohammed Yusuf, assumed the leadership of the group Mohammed Yusuf, who was to be extra-judicially executed in 2009 while in police detention, was said to have successfully radicalized the group and opened it to foreign collaboration, especially with the *Al-Qaeda* in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Under him the group stepped up its activism and intensified the propagation of an extreme Islamic doctrine which sees Western education and democracy as corruptive and immoral (Sunday Tribune, 12th February, 2012). He soon established his own mosque in Maiduguri which in effect became the headquarters of the group as well as the dispersal centre for its doctrine. Contrary to the belief in official circles the death of Mohammed Yusuf in police custody in 2009, unlike that of *Maitatsine*, did not lead to the eclipse of the group. Instead his followers not only multiplied but they spread to other parts of the region to establish Boko Haram presence. These were largely illiterate youths some of whom were school dropouts or petty itinerant traders, who with the ready-made army of jobless drifters, especially the *Almajiri*, soon bonded and made their presence felt in Borno, Yobe Adamawa and Bauchi States This Boko Haram crisis have caused many people to flee their homes. In 2014, the escalating violence caused by the Boko Haram insurgency in the north eastern region has led to an increase in the number of Internally

Displaced Persons (IDPs), especially in Adamawa, Bauchi, Yobe, Gombe and Taraba States. According to the United Nations multi-sectoral needs assessment conducted in May 2014, there were 650,000 IDPs¹ in the northeast region of Nigeria.

1.2 About Potiskum Town

Potiskum is a Local Government Area in Yobe State, Nigeria, on the A3 highway at [11°43'N 11°04'E / 11.717°N 11.067°E](#) / Coordinates: [11°43'N 11°04'E / 11.717°N 11.067°E](#) / . It had an area of 559 square kilometres (216 sq mi) and a population of 205,876 at the 2006 census.

Potiskum has been a thriving trade hegemony in Yobe State because of its strategic position as a centre of commerce, learning, spiritual and cultural revival. People from neighbouring Borno, Jigawa, Kano, Bauchi and Gombe States, and numerous others from Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Benin and Central African Republic have stakes in the 'biggest cattle market in sub-Saharan African,' which is situated in Potiskum. Close to the cattle market is the Potiskum grain/millet market. It was estimated in 2008 to sell 500 bags of grain on market day. The millet market is the largest in North-east Nigeria. Most products are transported to other parts of the country and neighboring countries

RECRUITMENT STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT OF BOKO HARAM IN POTISKUM

2.1 How I was recruited into Boko Haram (Ex- member experience)

Boko Haram movement was brought to Potiskum town by Ari Dikwa which served as its leader at the same time with its

headquarter at Moscow line *Dogo Tebo* ward with his deputy popularly known as Malam Bala Aljazeera they came with the strategy of empowering youth and financial support to business men and from time to time Muhammad Yusuf used to visit Potiskum preach in public places. At that time they were peaceful and maintained good relationship with both the government and the general public. Nevertheless, they disassociated themselves from anything related to government or western world most of them quit western education and civil service.

On the other side Malam Bala Aljazira the second in command established a dying industry where he employed several youth and empowered them by adopting this strategy he recruit quite number of his employee into the movement,

According to one time student and follower of Muhammad Yusuf movement before it turns into militant group he was selling fish one of his friend invite him into the movement and told him that he will take all his responsibilities and can offer him a financial assistance if he agree to join the movement. He later agreed and was offered one hundred and fifty thousand naira (#150,000) cash to boost his business. One day he invited him to go to Maiduguri to visit Muhammad Yusuf, when they went and met him Muhammad Yusuf he was introduced and told him they were on the right path and advised them not to wear expensive cloth and not to eat food except dates and Honey and they should not drink pure water or any type of bottle water, after coming back to Potiskum his friend gave him additional one hundred thousand to continue with his business.

We heard them saying we were going to wage a jihad, at that time we took it as a joke how can they fight Nigerian Government with all its forces. Not too long, they attacked Potiskum police station that was July 2009

2.2 Victims experience

One of the Boko Haram victim narrates that three (3) of his brothers were early members of Boko Haram in Potiskum Town. They were invited to join Boko Haram by Malam Bala Aljazira who was the deputy commandant of Boko Haram in Potiskum, he used to visit them and brought cassettes of Tafseer of Muhammad Yusuf to them. I tried to separate them but I couldn't because they were supported by their mother that is my step mother from onset and that was the beginning of the problem.

I realized that there is problem since most of Islamic scholars like Shiek Jafar Mahmud Adam, Dr Isa Ali Pantami etc have already exposed the dangers of Boko Haram and advised us to abstain from it. During that time I was under graduate student in University of Maiduguri my three brothers were looking me at me as Infidel, due to this I decided that whenever they started listening to Muhamad Yusuf Tafsir on radio in my presence I used to told those that I have power over them to leave the place.

My relationship with my brothers and our step mother falls apart since I rejected their creed at the same time I was schooling in University we were living in our family house but everything is separated even water in my pot they rejected it, Boko Haram victim narrates. He also said :My relationship with my brother was cut up to the extent that I was forced out of our family House with my wife for the fear of our life.

I decided to leave our family house after the first attacked by Boko Haram in Potiskum in July 2009. I faced so many challenges been an elder brother of Boko Haram members I found several houses to rent but my money was return after knowing that my brothers are members of Boko Haram. At the end I have to pay double amount that I suppose to pay for a rent with police clearance. I also find it difficult to stay longer in that rented House due to the rejection and intimidation from the people of the area. I was totally rejected by my neighbors.

Another victim narrates that, around 11:PM Boko Haram came to our house nobody knows how they get access into the house they wake up two children and asked them where about their mothers the boys accompanied them to their mothers the (Boko Haram) told the wives of District Head to open the door of their husband bed room and they do so, they looted almost everything and set the room on fire and said whoever try to extinguish the fire would be killed, There was over 30 people inside the house at the time of the attack. We climbed a ladder to neighboring house to save our lives.

In the morning when people came for rescue we found two children were burnt. That was how I lost two of my brothers and our entire property including my educational certificates.

However, another victim narrates his experience of Boko as: around 2:30 am Boko Haram came to the house of a former controller they knocked the door but the security man refused to open the gate one of them said if he did not open they will bomb the house he then opened and asked him to show them the apartment of his boss he took them and he (watchman) knocked the door after he opened and asked them what do they want? They replied nothing, but wanted to go with him, they took him and his son who was a medical doctor and they cart away their valuables and then set the house ablaze. In the morning their relatives informed the security and later people found them died not too far from their house . Police took them to mortuary later on handed over to their relatives for funeral.

Another victim said: Boko Haram entered into one Wazirin Pataskum's house twice at the first instance, they came after Isha prayer and met him with his son and collected money from him. The second time they came around 8:30 pm we were about 20 people inside the house we just heard banging on the gate then the gate was locked, one of them jumped over the fence and opened the gate for the remaining. However they went to his wives apartment and cart away huge amount of money and jewelries. They came back to us in a living room with his wives they knocked the door we refused to open, they pretended to bomb the room if we did not open, But we still refused to open the door for them. They insisted then we open the door for them. As they entered the room they started preaching for us saying that they were on the right path but we were not on right path, what they were doing is Islam and the teaching of Islam. They emphasized, they should kill us because we are infidels.

Moreover, they collected our money and our phones, on Waziri's side they collected all his money naira and foreign currencies and continue with their preaching he collected the money and continued with their preaching for up to one and half hour. Then later on they left

However, another person narrates that : it was unknown to us that the wife and children of my neighbor members Boko Haram until when somebody found AK 47 raffle inside a drainage beside our houses and handed it over to security from there the elder son of my neighbor disappeared with his step mother, sister and his brothers. Latter on he came back with the intention to carry his father but he didn't found him, his mother told him that his father was not sleeping in the house for long. A their neighbor we all flee our homes to a place that is bit safer.

On the morning of November 10, 2014, students of Government Science and Technical College, Potiskum, were lined up on the school's assembly ground when they noticed a stranger holding a schoolbag .The school rule was that no student should have bags with them at assembly.A 16-year-old student said: I saw the prefects struggling to seize a bag from an older boy. I am not even sure I heard any sound before I found myself thrown about 40 to 45 meters from where I

was standing. I had no pain but saw my friends, dead and dying slowly as they bled from torn off body parts. My mind was numb. It was later in hospital that the pain came. My right leg was amputated during my six-month stay in the hospital. I continue to go for check-ups but I am back in school as I am able to move with the aid of crutches.

Fig. 1 Bomb Attacks by Boko Haram Sect in Potiskum from Town 2009 to 2012

S/N	DATE OF ATTACK	STATE	LOCATION OF ATTACK	IMPACT
1	July 27, 2009	Yobe	Potiskum Police Divisional Headquarters.	4 people killed
2	August 3, 2012	Yobe	Potiskum Central Mosque	More 100 non-fatal injuries and 1 killed
3	July 30, 2014	Yobe	Sakafa Mosque Potiskum	17 killed
4	July 30, 2014	Yobe	Alkaali Kalli Mosque Potiskum	8 killed
5	November 3, 2014	Yobe	Tsohuwar kasuwa Potiskum	30 people killed
6	November 10, 2014	Yobe	Government Science and Technical College Potiskum	50 students killed
7	December 28, 2014	Yobe	Arikime Primary School, Potiskum	1 boy killed
8	January 10, 2015	Yobe	Potiskum Police Divisional Headquarters	2 police men killed
9	January 11, 2015	Yobe	Twin Blast at Potiskum Kasuwar Waya	7 people killed
10	January 15, 2015	Yobe	Maiduguri Road, Potiskum.	No Causality recorded
11	January 18, 2015	Yobe	Ibal Filling Station Bauchi Road, Potiskum	8 people killed
12	February 1, 2015	Yobe	Hon. Sabo Garbu residence, Potiskum.	5 people killed
13	February 11, 2015	Yobe	Tsohuwar kasuwa, Potiskum	1 person killed

14	February 17, 2015		Al-Ameen Restaurant, Potiskum	3 people killed
15	February 22, 2015	Yobe	Kasuwar Waya, Potiskum	7 people Killed
16	February 24, 2015	Yobe	Tashar Dan Barno (Motor park) Potiskum	15 persons killed
17	April 20, 2015	Yobe	Sakafa Mosque Potiskum	1 Person killed

Source: Ibrahim El-Tafseer Achieve (freelance Journalist)

3.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper is about narrating the experiences of Boko Haram victims of Potiskum Town in Yobe State, as been stated in the introduction Potiskum Town was one of the strong hole of Boko Haram sect. The study used primary data collected through open interview and interactions with the victims. Further more, the study highlight the recruitment strategy used by Boko Haram in Potiskum, the study findings shows that most of the members joint Boko Haram because of financial assistant rendered by their recruiters while some joint the sect because of ideology. This evil attack has leads to parents removing their children from the school, changing schools, or telling them not to go again. That act has produce great drop out, low enrolment, massive failure and trauma on the part of the teachers and students.

Finally, the paper recommends that Ideological war should be more suitable in fighting against insurgency than physical assault. And also poverty reduction by any means should go long way in reducing the rate of member who joint Boko Haram to make money.

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